from that I constantly met officers and men home on leave who had spent months at the battle front and had been taking part daily in the incessant small engagements—great and

My contacts with fighting officers and men campaign in Flanders or France. It is not merely a boast but a fact that I had more converse with fighting officers and men, untabbed with scarlet, straight from the trenches, than had any member of the Staff either at General Headquarters or at the War Office.

When I meet men possessing special knowledge and experience on any subject, it has been my habit through life to question them on the theme they know and like best. The information I thus acquire leaves a deeper and more inerasable impression on my mind than what is communicated to me in any other way. Much study is a weariness to the flesh, but conversations with a knowledgeable person stimulate and refresh and nourish one's mind. Had I depended entirely on departmental chiefs, I could never have carried through my schemes of Old Age Pensions or Insurance. I know the importance of maintaining discipline in a Department. Our public services are manned by some of the best and most competent men in this or any country, and it is essential to efficiency that their legitimate power and prestige in their respective spheres should be fully maintained.

But freedom of access to independent information is quite compatible with order and due

respect for the hierarchy, if that liberty is tactfully and judiciously exercised by the Minister and wisely acquiesced in by the service. There must be no appearance of flouting the men at the top. On the other hand, they must not make it impossible to act without forcing an open disregard of their authority.